

6 Meeting- «PUBERTY AND ADULTHOOD»

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



LECTURE 2:

Sexuality I

***María Merino, PhD. Science Education
(Autism Burgos, Spain)***

***Antonios Vadolas (Child and Adolescent's Centre,
Greece)***

***Yannis Brintzoulakis (Child and Adolescent's Centre,
Greece)***



- **What is sexuality?**
- **Private body parts**
- **Personal Hygiene and care**
- **Private and social spaces and privacy**



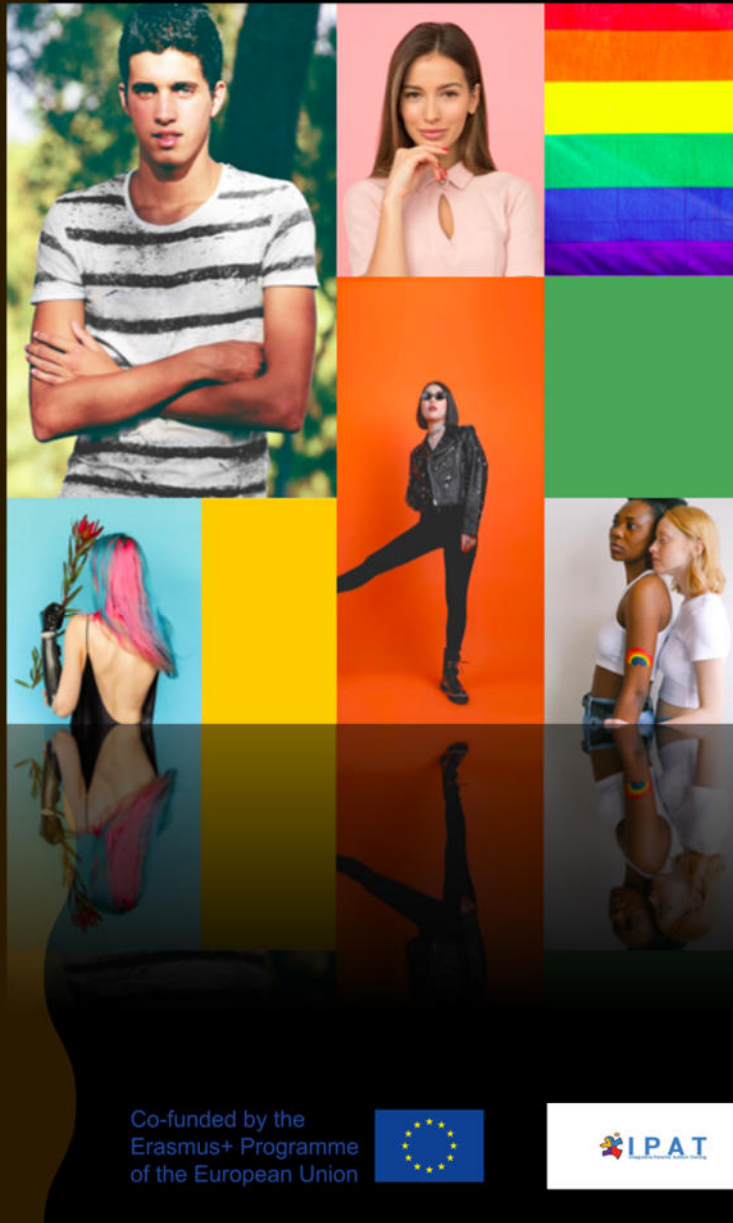
Sexuality 1: Outline



LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Overview about human sexuality
- Understanding sexual diversity in ASD
- Topics that should interest parents to talk about
 - Intimacy and Privacy
 - Preventing sexual abuse, sexting, grooming and vulnerability in internet
 - Sexual prediction making
 - Relationships
 - Sexual Health





- **What is sexuality?**

Sexuality describes how you express yourself in a sexual way.

a holistic term for someone's sexual behaviours, attractions, likes, dislikes, kinks and preferences.

Part of your sexuality is your sexual orientation, which refers to who you're attracted to, want to have sex with and fall in love with.

- **Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors. (WHO, 2002.)**

- **Biological sex vs gender**

Our sexual development is a spectrum, that cannot be defined solely by external genitalia nor by XX/XY simplistic and dichotomous point of view

- GENDER NOT ALWAYS CORRESPONDING TO SELF PERCEIVED GENDER



Private body parts

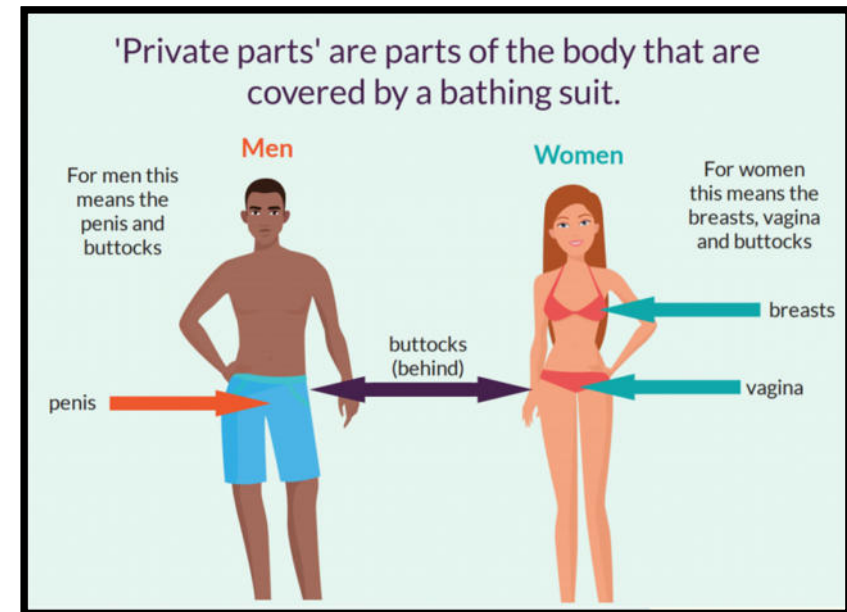
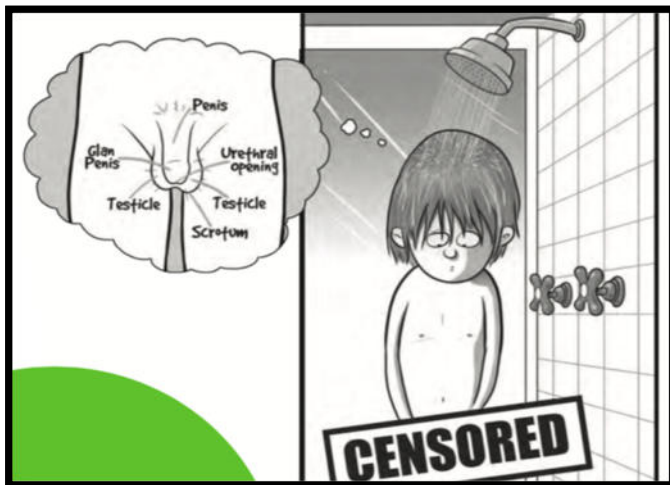
- Teaching how to follow their own feelings but also some cultural knowledge about intimacy and private body parts

Learning about bodies helps autistic children feel comfortable with their bodies.

children with ASD need to learn about private and public areas of the body. This can help them understand what's OK to do in private but not in public

Learning about personal boundaries and different kinds of touch is part of learning about bodies.


Visual supports and social stories can help autistic children learn about bodies and personal boundaries.



Personal hygiene and care

- Good personal hygiene care is essential to self esteem and good relationships
- Autonomy in personal hygiene is basic to prevent sexual abuse
- Sexuality is linked with hygienic previous routines



- 
- Isabelle Henault, French-Canadian psychologist and author of *Asperger's Syndrome and Sexuality: From Adolescence through Adulthood*, provides some great tips to help parents talk effectively with their teens.
 - Don't use excessive and wordy explanations. Keep it simple
 - Talk to your child about sexuality in a positive way, free of prejudice
 - Use accurate terms and proper vocabulary, not childish substitutions
 - Be concrete in your explanations
 - Be sure your child develops a clear understanding of the concepts of consent, stalking, abuse and privacy.

Is this a
PURPLE PRIVATE
circle area?



Is this is a
RED STRANGER
circle area?



Is this a
YELLOW ACQUAINTANCES
circle area?



Is this an
ORANGE HELPER
circle area?



Is this a
BLUE FAMILY
circle area?

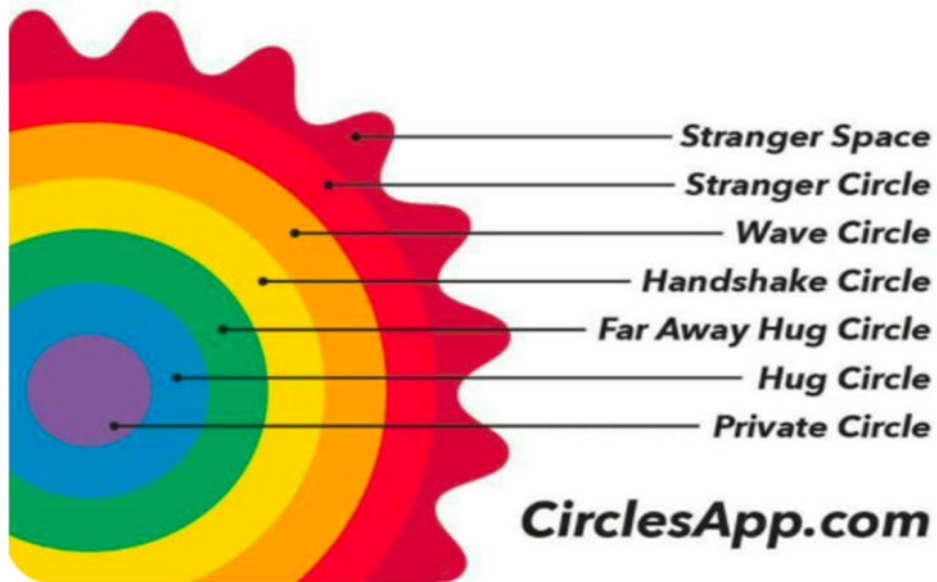


Is this a
GREEN FRIENDSHIP
circle area?



Private and social spaces

- Personal Boundaries:
- Limits and rules about how we behave around others and how other people behave around us.
- Might reflect feelings about being touched by other people, what you feel comfortable saying to other people about yourself, and so on.



Intimacy and privacy

- In autism understanding non explicit rules is a complex puzzle
- New spaces of seduction make this reality more complex at same time more accessible
- Sexual diversity and feelings needs that specialists in autism also helps them in this area
- Not understanding the risks make them vulnerable
- But also we need to talk about feelings and society

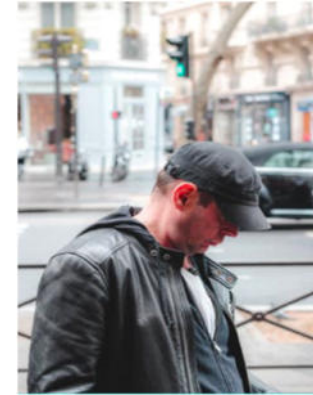


Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Clinical examples

N is a trans autistic woman but has not made up her mind to tell it until she was 22, after several attempts at suicidal planning



A has met his first partner through social networks, he has told him that he is autistic but realizes that he is very afraid of not understanding anything about how to act in dates, and in sexual relations, as well as telling his family that he is gay



About relationships, sexuality, parenthood

Early abuse stories has to being addressed

Gender fluid and non conforming sexual orientation more prevalent in the spectrum

Sensorial overwhelming in intimate relationships

Stressful life situations and alexitimia.

Parenthood related to more stress and anxiety levels and low self perceived competence

Sexual offenders and problems with understanding boundaries





Clinical examples

N is 19 years old and is with an adult who says through the networks that he loves her, without having had prior knowledge of each other, they have a fast, unpleasant sexual relationship but N does not identify that there has been no consent, not even when the man despises her and tells her that he no longer likes her immediately after the assault.

A 45-year-old autistic man is on trial for downloading and sharing child pornography on the e-mule platform. The intervention before this fact reveals a history suffered of repeated sexual abuse in childhood



In Spain...

- Autistic organizations started to introduce sexuality specific programs 10 years ago
- These programs try to understand sexuality in the whole spectrum, so collect information from families and professionals about sexuality in ASD with and without ID
- Prevention actions started to be taken into account inside these organizations (autonomy, toilets, education programs and training about sexuality has been taken into account)



IN SPAIN

- Diversity and sexuality in the spectrum was a taboo
- There isn't a general law about trans and unconforming gender so each community has their own protocols
- Sexual harassment prevention is getting more important inside organizations of families but still without specific protocols



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, K. R., Peña, E. V., & Rankin, S. (2017). Unwanted sexual contact: Students with autism and other disabilities at greater risk. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(5), 771-776.

Rocheleau, J. N. (2019).

Privacy Attitudes and Behaviours of Autistic and Non-Autistic Teenagers on Social Networking Sites (Doctoral dissertation, Carleton University).

Roberts, A. L., Koenen, K. C., Lyall, K., Robinson, E. B., & Weisskopf, M. G. (2015). Association of autistic traits in adulthood with childhood abuse, interpersonal victimization, and posttraumatic stress. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 45*, 135-142.

Tullis, C. A., & Zangrillo, A. N. (2013). Sexuality education for adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorders. *Psychology in the Schools, 50*(9), 866-875.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Thanks!

María Merino Martínez

psicologia@autismoburgos.org

AUTISMO BURGOS

